fill gap between indigenous availability and requirement of 7th Five Year Plan Projects.

Reduction in voting age

679. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have since taken a decision to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) Government are of the view that, having regard to the socio-economic conditions obtaining in our country it is not practicable or advantageous now to lowest the voting age.

Public sector investment in Eastern Region

680. SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the total public sector investment in the eastern region in general and West Bengal in particular, for setting up of new modern industries todate sice 1962;

(b) the particulars of the Central and centrally-sponsored new industrial units that have come into existence todate since 1962; and

(c) the factors responsible for eastern zone's poor performance in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI K. K. TEWARI): (a) and (c) It is presumed that the Hon'ble Member is referring to investment in Central Public Enterprises in the eastern region. As on 31-3-1985 the investment in central public enterprises in the eastern region stood at Rs. 12176.68 crores as detailed below:—

(Rs. in crores)

Name of the State	Investment in terms of gross-block as on 31.3.1985
Orissa	2997.74
West Bengal	3345.37
Bihar	5833.77
TOTAL :	12176.88

This works out 25.73 per cent of the total investment in central public enterprises in the country as on 31-3-1985, which is quite significant.

(b) Some of the major industrial units that have come up in the public sector (including nationalised units) after 1962 in the Eastern Region are:— Bokaro Steel Plant in Bihar including its expansion units; expansion, modernisation of Rourkela and Durgapur Steel Plants including Alloy Steel Plant at Durgapur, Eastern Coalfields and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd.; units of Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. at Sindri and Talcher; Hindustan Fertilizer Corporations's Units at Durgapur, Barauni and Haldia; Indian Oil Corporation's Refineries at Barauni and Haldia; National Aluminium Co. Ltd. in Orissa; Sargipali Lead Mines of Hindustan Zinc Ltd. in Orissa; Paradeep Phosphates in Orissa; HAL Ltd.'s Unit in Orissa; Orissa Sands Complex of Indian Rare Earths Ltd.; NTPC Farakka Project in West BGengal etc. In addition, Govt. have nationalised a number of sick units in West Bengal such as Braithwaite & Co. Ltd, Burn Standard Co. Ltd., Jessop & Co. Ltd., NTC Units at West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa etc.

Bid for off-shore oil exploration

681. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government called a meeting of the Indian and foreign companies in May, 1986 for a bid for

off-shore oil explorations in the country;

(b) is so, what are the names of the oil companies who participated at the meeting; and

(c) what was the nature of discussions held and decisions arrived at?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POWER AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHATGI): (a) Presentations were made at New Delhi, London and Houston on May 7, 14, and 20, 1986, respectively to the international oil companies for the third round of exploration licensing in the Indian off-shore.

(b) The names of the oil companies who participated in the presentations are given in the enclosed statement. [*See* Appendix CXXIX, Annexure No. 40].

(c) Prospects of the offshore blocks put on offer, fiscal regimes and terms and conditions proposed for the contract were explained to the oil companies, who participated.

Setting up hydel power plant in North Bengal

682. SHRI CHITTA BASU:
SHRI RAMKRISHNA MAZUMDER:

Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of West Bengal has since a detailed scheme for the setting up of a Rs. 225 crore hydel power plant in North Bengal with Japanese collaboration; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by the Central Government for the clearance of the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POWER AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHATGI): (a) and (b) No such proposal has been received in Central Electricity Authority. However, the Teesta Canal Fall Hydro-electric Project (67.5 MW) in West Bengal, costing Rs. 80.7 crores, was sanctioned by the Planning Commission in September, 1985 and was posed for OECF loan assistance during 1986-87. The Government of Japan have pledged a loan assistance of Yen 8.025 billion for this Project.

Setting up of Synthetic Oil Plants

683. SHRI CHITTA BASU:
SHRI RAMKRISHNA MAZUMDER:

Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had examined any proposal to set up plants for production of synthetic oil from coal;

(b) if so, what were the reasons for which the proposal was later abandoned;

(c) whether Government would review the earlier decision in the light of the report of Sir J. C. Ghosh Committee of 1953; and

(d) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE): (a) to (d) In 1956 and in 1977 two committees, namely, the J. C. Ghosh Committee and the Chakravarty Panel examined the question of production of liquid fuels from coal. As the economics of such conversion was found to be unfavourable, the proposals were not taken up for implementation. In 1984 the Sidhu Committee recommended conversion of coal to geseous and liquid fuels. Coal samples were got tested for their suitability for gasification. A pre-feasibility study report on conversion of coal to oil on a commercial scale was prepared, under the auspices of UNDP, UNIDO and Coal India Ltd. The report has examined a suitable technology for coal to oil Conversion and economics of a plant to manufacture 1 million tonnes of liquid products per